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Do women engage in self-protection because of violence generally or sexual violence specifically? An analysis based on the 2009 General Social Survey

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Graduate Program in Sociology
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Arts
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DO WOMEN ENGAGE IN SELF-PROTECTION BECAUSE OF VIOLENCE
GENERALLY OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE SPECIFICALLY? AN ANALYSIS BASED
ON THE 2009 GENERAL SOCIAL SURVEY

(Women, victimization, and self-protection)

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

Pamela Rose Glatt

Graduate Program in Sociology

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada

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Abstract

Using data from the 2009 General Social Survey on victimization, this study examines the relationship between Canadian women's past experiences of sexual and physical victimization within the past five years and their subsequent engagement in self-protective behaviour. Self-protective behaviour is divided into three categories, including self-defense class enrollment, weapon carrying and overall protection (combines self-defense class and weapons). Three hypotheses are examined. Firstly, this study looks at whether women who have been victimized (regardless of type) are more likely to practice self-protective behaviour than their non-victim counterparts. Then, within the victims-only group, this study looks at whether women who have been sexually victimized are more likely to engage in self-protective behaviour than women who have experienced physical victimization, or whether the impact of physical and sexual victimization are similar. Results indicate a strong positive relationship between past experiences of victimization and engaging in self-protection. Women who have been victimized are more likely to enroll in a self-defense class, carry a weapon and engage in overall protection in comparison to women who have not been victimized. Furthermore, women who have experienced sexual victimization are more likely to engage in overall protection than women who have experienced physical victimization. When self-defense class enrollment and weapon carrying are analyzed separately however, the impact of physical and sexual victimization is not statistically different when the control variables are included. This suggests that separating self-defense class enrollment and weapon carrying might hide the full impact of sexual victimization on women's insecurity and need for self-protection.

Key words: insecurity; physical victimization; self-protection; sexual victimization; victimization; weapon carrying; women

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Chapter 1

1. Introduction

Violence against women, both physical and sexual, is an institutional problem embedded in the structure of our society. Feminist criminologists have struggled with understanding both the pervasiveness of this social phenomenon, and how to prevent it from occurring. Accordingly, most research on the victimization of women as a group has focused on the prevalence of gendered violence, and why males are most commonly the perpetrators. How women react to this violence is only recently being addressed in criminological research, within the past twenty years or so (Muraskin 2012; Stanko, 1990). Also, women's self-protective adaptations are not necessarily due to the typical fear of 'stranger crime', since most violent victimization is attributable to non-strangers, such as romantic partners or ex-partners (Brecklin, 2004). How women both negotiate their personal safety, and cope with past experiences of victimization are important to consider when examining why women engage in self-protection.

It is well known within the criminology discipline that among female criminal offenders, their criminalization is often intertwined with past experiences of victimization, such as engaging in self-defense following a battering episode (Comack, 2006). However, little is known about how women in general engage in self-protective behaviours following a past experience of victimization. The goal of this study is to examine Canadian women's practice of self-protective behaviour as a result of past experiences of physical and/or sexual victimization. Self-protective behaviours are defined as enrollment in a self-defense class, carrying a weapon or strategic tool, and overall protection (which combines the first two behaviours). Essentially, this study employs three hypotheses to examine this trend. Firstly, this study determines whether women who have been victimized within the past five years are more likely to engage in self-protection than women who have not been victimized. From this perspective, it is strategic for women who have been victimized to partake in self-protective behaviour due to fear of further victimization, and a more acute awareness of their potential for victimization. The second and third hypotheses explored in this study, examine whether

one type of victimization has a more powerful influence on women's self-protective behaviour. Accordingly, the second hypothesis is that women who have been sexually victimized are more likely to engage in self-protection because sexual victimization is more harmful and degrading than physical victimization. Finally, the third hypothesis posits that physical and sexual victimization will be similar, and that both types of victimization are equally harmful. These hypotheses are tested based on a logistic regression model, using data from the 2009 General Social Survey (GSS) on victimization.

This paper will begin with a comprehensive literature review of general theories of female insecurity. Women's experiences of victimization will be examined, followed by a discussion on women's self-protective strategies. Although a majority of the research is based on American data, this study seeks to provide a foundation for Canadian data on the topic. Additionally, Canada is directly influenced by American culture given its close proximity, which makes American research quite useful in this regard.

Following the literature review, this paper will describe the 2009 GSS, including the specific sample of women employed in this study. Subsequently, the methodology will be discussed, detailing the variables, their coding and the usage of the logistic regression technique. Next, the results will be organized into two sections, descriptive statistics and multivariate analyses. Accordingly, these results will then be interpreted and discussed in comparison with previous research. Lastly, the limitations and implications of this research will be considered, including areas of future research.

Chapter 2

2. Theoretical Context and Literature Review

2.1. General Theories of Female Insecurity and Self-Protection

In North American society, women share a common awareness of their vulnerability to victimization (Comack, 2006). Even with the progress of the feminist movement, and the substantial amount of power women have gained in society, they are still considered second class citizens in many respects, most notably as victims of gendered violence. The victimization of women, physically, sexually and emotionally is among the most pervasive social problems in our society. Women are often idealized as vulnerable, passive and sexualized objects, subject to male aggression and violence (McCaughey, 1998). Accordingly, although women are generally less likely than men to experience criminal victimization, they continuously report higher levels of fear of victimization (DeKeseredy, 2011). It is ingrained in the consciousness of women that their relative size, strength and power in comparison to men's puts them at a disadvantage (Felson, 2002). Essentially, it then seems strategic that women would resort to self-protective measures in order to avoid victimization. Felson and Paré (2010) assert that self-defensive tactics are often a strategic adaptation to the presence of dangerous adversaries, such as risk of victimization or feelings of insecurity. The patriarchal nature of society where women as a group maintain a lower status than men as a group, and the difference in physical features between men and women are important points to consider here in examining the roots of insecurity and the need for self-defensive tactics among women.

2.1.1. Patriarchy and Male Violence

Patriarchy is predicated on maintaining the lower status of women, and the dominance of men (Balfour and Comack, 2006). The second-class status of women as a group is both socially and legally institutionalized in society. Gordon and Riger (1989) apply the term 'female fear' to emphasize that fear of victimization is a primary concern

for the majority of women. For women, daily life is characterized by constant risk and uncertainty in both private and public spaces. Sacco (1995) contends that women are four times more likely than men to report feeling unsafe walking alone in their neighbourhood at night. Essentially, men maintain a high level of privilege in society, including the luxury of not having to constantly assess their risk of victimization on a daily basis. For example, rarely do men experience fear when they find themselves alone with a woman in an elevator. They are unlikely to wait for her to press her floor first, out of fear that she might follow him. It is often quite the opposite for women. Men seldom have to routinely worry about their safety, whereas for women, negotiating their risk of victimization is a persistent task in almost any environment they find themselves (Stanko, 1992).

When examining intimate partner violence, the statistics are staggering. According to a countrywide study on violence against women in the United States, violence is the leading cause of injury to all women in the country (Muraskin, 2012). According to the Canadian Domestic Violence Death Review Committee, between 2002 and 2007, ninety-four percent of domestic violence homicide victims in Ontario were women (DeKeseredy, 2011). When examining the 1993 Violence Against Women Survey, approximately fifty-one percent of Canadian women experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual assault since the age of sixteen (Johnson and Sacco, 1995). As DeKeseredy (2011) notes, “it often hurts to be a woman in Canada”. Thirty years ago, violence against women was a private issue, and was hardly considered a problem, let alone a social issue embedded in the structure of society. Today, cultural norms perpetuate models of gender and sexuality where men’s violence and women’s fear of victimization are normative (McCaughey, 1998). We live in a culture, where gendered violence, including battering and rape are sadly familiar experiences for many women.

2.1.2. Physical Size and Strength

For any type of violence, physical power is always a critical resource, and as Felson (2002) argues, “size matters”. Felson (2002) maintains that gender differences in size, strength and the tendency to utilize violence shape the nature of violent encounters between men and women. Men’s physical advantage often encourages them to employ violence, and discourages women from retaliating with violence. Dobbs et al. (2009)

emphasize that women have a keen awareness of their potential vulnerability to victimization. Women constantly evaluate their ability to successfully defend themselves against an imminent attack, including their own physical strength and running speed compared to the average man's (ibid). The constant awareness of their relative physical weakness often causes women to experience heightened feelings of vulnerability, which can result in limiting their self-defense abilities (Bennett and Flavin, 1994). Felson and Paré (2010) note that since women must contend with adversaries that are mainly men, it may be advantageous for them to engage in self-protective behaviours, such as carrying a weapon. In examining the Southern United States, Young (1985) argues that the violent tendencies of the male population often cause women to employ various safety precautions due to their relative size and strength. Additionally, he finds that in the South, females are more likely to own guns due to self-protection reasons given their physical size relative to that of men's. In her study of self-defense class enrollment, Hollander (2010) argues that many women feel that self-defense measures are necessary given their smaller size. In short, it seems as though it is strategic for women to engage in self-protective behaviours due to their physical vulnerabilities, relative to a potential male aggressor.

2.2. Past Victimization and Self-Protection

There is an extensive amount of literature demonstrating that women engage in self-protective measures such as enrolling in a self-defense class or carrying weapons following a traumatic experience of victimization (Hollander, 2010; Stanko, 1990; Stanko, 1992). The word 'safety' carries with it different connotations for men and women. For men, it is often about physical wellbeing, whereas for women, it denotes sexual, physical and emotional wellbeing. In their large-scale study on female college students, Brecklin and Ullman (2005) note that forty-four to forty-eight percent of participants in their study on self-defense training had been both sexually and physically victimized at some point in their lifetime. The scholars maintain that victimization is often a key predictor of self-protective strategies.

2.2.1. Sexual Victimization

Sexual victimization is a distinctively gendered type of victimization where women are always more likely to be the victims (Stanko, 1990). For women, the fear of rape is often an ever-present terror and overshadows the fear of any other type of victimization (ibid). To most women, rape is the most degrading and stigmatizing form of victimization, and the humiliation of the experience often silences them, resulting in low rates of reporting to formal authorities. Even when women do report their victimization to the criminal justice system, they often experience anxiety. This can result in them choosing not to testify in court, leading to the case being dismissed (Dawson and Dinovitzer, 2001). In their study on female undergraduate students' experiences of sexual assault and perceived safety, Culbertson et al. (2001) assert that women who have experienced sexual victimization are generally more fearful, and are more likely than those who have not experienced victimization to engage in self-defensive tactics such as carrying a weapon. The scholars maintain that women who have been sexually assaulted generally feel less safe in both their homes and in public. Such experiences of victimization are pivotal in these women's decisions to take self-protective measures. Brecklin (2004) and Searles and Follansbee (1984) point to a strong correlation between sexual victimization and enrollment in self-defense classes. In her study on women's self-defense training and victimization history, Brecklin (2004) reports that a third of women enrolled in self-defense classes are rape victims. Her large-scale study on female college students examines both childhood and adult experiences of victimization among women. She concludes that physical and sexual victimization are both pertinent factors in influencing women's enrollment in self-defense classes, but that a higher number of her participants had experienced the latter. In Hollander's (2010) longitudinal study of female university students enrolled in self-defense classes, the majority of her participants had experienced higher levels of sexual victimization, with seventy-five percent reporting such incidences. Muraskin (2012) contends that the most common fear among rape survivors is a concern that the assailant will return. Consequently, victims are often reluctant to return to their daily routines, and may engage in self-protective behaviours ranging from self-defense precautions to avoidance strategies. DeKeseredy (2011) and Dutton (2006) note that approximately twenty-five percent of female undergraduate

students in Canada experience some variation of sexual violation annually, ranging from minor offenses such as unwanted touching to extreme offenses such as rape. In his undergraduate class “Violence Against Women”, DeKeseredy (2011) attempts to educate his students about male and female differences concerning fear of sexual victimization by asking them to brainstorm effective means of avoiding it. Subsequently, the men tend to respond with minimal input, only putting forth suggestions such as “avoid prison”, whereas the women advocate a multitude of precautions such as not walking alone at night, to carrying a whistle or some type of weapon (ibid). This demonstrates the pertinence of fear of victimization that women constantly experience, whereas for men as a group, it rarely comes to mind.

When examining the female prison population in industrialized countries such as the United States or Canada, it is important to note that the majority of offenders have experienced some type of victimization (Comack, 2006). Females’ experiences of victimization tend to influence their subsequent criminalization, with the majority of female-perpetuated violence occurring in the context of self-defense (Gilfus, 1993). For example, in their book *Criminalizing Women*, Balfour and Comack (2006) disclose that approximately fifty-three percent of female federal offenders have been sexually abused at some point in their childhood. Although incarcerated female offenders are not included in national victimization studies, there is a striking resemblance between engaging in self-defensive tactics (whether criminalized or not) and past experiences of sexual victimization. There is an overwhelming amount of evidence suggesting that this relationship is quite significant.

2.2.2. Physical Victimization

Physical victimization sometimes occurs simultaneously with sexual victimization (Brecklin and Ullman, 2005; DeKeseredy, 2011; Hollander, 2010;). When scholars examine the physical and/or sexual victimization of women, there seems to be a smaller correlation between physical victimization independently and self-defensive tactics such as enrolling in a self-defense class. In her study on enrollment in self-defense versus general physical education enrollment among women, Huddleston (1991) finds that those enrolled in self-defense classes were much more likely to have been sexually victimized,

whereas other incidences of victimization such as physical abuse were not as strong of a predictor. She argues that the women enrolled in self-defense classes recognize their potential vulnerability to men, and are taking self-protective measures accordingly. Hollander (2010) notes that among the participants in her study, seventy-five percent had experienced some form of sexual victimization, whereas ten percent disclosed any prior physical victimization being their chief motivator for enrolling in self-defense classes. Brecklin (2004) contends that women are more likely to engage in self-protective strategies following experiences of *multiple* forms of victimization, including both childhood and adult sexual, physical, and emotional victimization. The key similarity in the literature on self-protective measures and victimization among women is that sexual victimization is usually present.

When examining domestic violence, more recently referred to as intimate partner violence, it seems as though physical victimization does not have as significant an effect on women engaging in self-protective strategies. Ferraro and Johnson (1983) maintain that battered women are more likely to rationalize staying with the assailant rather than turning to self-protective strategies. They suggest that women who have been physically victimized by an intimate partner may engage in “techniques of neutralization”, and rationalize their partner’s behaviour due to various fears and anxieties associated with leaving the partner. Physical violence often occurs within the private sphere of the home, whereas sexual victimization occurs in both public and private spaces. Outside of intimate partner relationships, a man rarely physically assaults a woman without sexual victimization being closely tied in (DeKeseredy, 2011). DeKeseredy (2011) notes that approximately thirty-five percent of women in Canada experience physical victimization annually, however much of this violence occurs within the context of private relationships, where the woman is reluctant to seek help or engage in self-defensive tactics. He continues that when a woman does attempt to flee an abusive relationship, she becomes six times more likely to be assaulted by her ex-partner (ibid). So although physical victimization is associated with self-protective behaviours to an extent, it is often in conjunction with the presence of sexual victimization, rather than independently.

Although the majority of physical victimization against women stems from a male culprit, female-on-female violence still occurs (to a lesser extent). Scholars have offered

multiple explanations for violence perpetuated by females, such as gang membership and lovers' triangle brawls. Anderson (1999) proposes that behaviour within gangs is often influenced by a "code of the street", where violence is employed as a reaction to disrespect. Although he originally applied this theory to male gang membership, it can be used to explain the occurrence of violence initiated by female gang members. Within the context of gang membership, women account for approximately 3.3 percent of violent crimes (Chesney-Lind and Pasko, 2004). Miller and Decker (2001) maintain that female gang members rarely engage in violence unless extensively provoked (such as when they experience disrespect) and generally leave the violence to the men. Here, gender ultimately shapes their participation and experiences in 'risky' activities as the men are more willing to engage in violence because it is expected of them (within the gang context). Chesney-Lind and Pasko (2004) posit that girls' violent participation in gangs is heavily influenced by their gender and their lack of power as females. They continue that females engage in violence when they are defending themselves or when they have experienced disrespect.

Female-on-female violence also occurs within the context of lovers' brawls, typically over a male romantic partner. This occurs more with younger females rather than older ones, as in the case of Reena Virk's murder. Fifteen-year old Kelly Ellard instigated the swarming, beating and murder of Virk, whom she believed was flirting with her boyfriend. The perpetrators included seven females and one male (Jiwani, 2002). Although this case is high profile, it demonstrates the context in which female-on-female violence can occur. Karla Homolka is another pivotal example of female-on-female violence. Homolka engaged in both physical and sexual violence against two female teenagers that she and her partner Paul Bernardo had abducted. Once again, her violence against these women involved a male partner, which demonstrates that female assailants rarely engage in violence independently. It is important to note that female-on-female violence is a rare occurrence, yet it is often publicized as a moral panic, that female violence is on the rise. Women in general are much less likely to engage in violence in comparison to their male counterparts. Furthermore, when women do engage in violence against other women, it most likely involves a male, whether as a co-aggressor or as the reason for the violence (Comack, 2006).

2.3. Other Factors Influencing Self-Protective Behaviours

Although victimization seems to be a good predictor of engagement in self-protective behaviours, indirect experiences of victimization can often be pertinent push factors. Indirect experiences of victimization can include media reports, witnessing victimization, knowing someone who has been victimized, living in a high-crime or 'bad' neighbourhood, or simply awareness of one's potential for victimization. A lack of trust in formal social control mechanisms, such as the criminal justice system, and the police in particular may also prompt women to engage in informal means of social control such as self-protection.

2.3.1. Media

The media is constantly bombarding us with new accounts of rapes, abductions, domestic violence and murders on a daily basis. With the moral panic that has consequently ensued concerning the potential vulnerability of women, turning to self-protective strategies can be viewed as a rational response to perceived danger. Stanko (1990) notes that women will often label themselves as vulnerable to victimization due to their gender. She continues that indirect experiences of violence, such as media accounts can be as debilitating as a direct experience. Hollander (2010) contends that indirect experiences of victimization are sometimes better predictors of self-protective behaviours than direct experiences of sexual and physical victimization. She maintains that when the media warns women about violence, or publishes news reports about victimization, it often results in women as a group feeling victimized, even if they have not personally been assaulted. This is a chief contributor to women enrolling in self-defense classes, carrying weapons, avoiding certain places and purchasing safety devices (ibid). In fact, twenty-one percent of participants in Hollander's (2010) study report enrolling in self-defense classes due to stories they had heard about women who were attacked.

Media reports can also cause women to mistrust formal authorities' abilities to protect them from victimization, prompting them to take individual precautions. This is exemplified by a recent article published in the *Wall Street Journal* in response to ten

unsolved sexual attacks in the Brooklyn, New York area. The headline reads as follows, “Note to women in the South Park Slope and surrounding Brooklyn: you might want to think twice before wearing shorts or skirts when you walk home at night” (Wall Street Journal, 2011, September 30). Such messages perpetuate the idea that women are not safe, and can cause them to resort to self-help forms of self-protection, such as enrolling in a self-defense class.

Conversely, the media can have a positive effect on women’s self-protective strategies by depicting women engaging in self-defense as resilient. This is a common theme in popular Hollywood movies such as *Charlie’s Angels*, or *Enough*. *Charlie’s Angels* demonstrates women successfully engaging in martial arts techniques, whereas *Enough* focuses on a victim of physical abuse learning self-defense techniques in order to fend off her abusive husband. Additionally, the media can further facilitate feelings of safety among women by portraying the police as successful in arresting violent offenders. There is often extensive media coverage following the conviction of violent offenders, such as Paul Bernardo, and this can be seen as conducive in increasing women’s feelings of safety. Essentially, the media is a strong institutional influence in our society, and can play a pivotal role in women’s choice to engage in self-defensive tactics.

2.3.2. Witnessing victimization or knowing someone who has experienced victimization

Angelman et al. (2009) found that women are more likely to enroll in a self-defense class if they have witnessed a rape or know someone who has been sexually victimized. The experience of witnessing or knowing someone who has been sexually victimized can cause a woman to re-evaluate her risk of vulnerability. It makes the incidence of victimization seem more pertinent and increases her sense of perceived vulnerability. Hollander (2010) asserts that although personal experiences of violence are important predictors of fear, vicarious experiences can be equally as traumatizing. She particularly points to knowing others who have been victimized and hearing narratives of violence (whether through friends or the media) as important predictors of self-protective behaviour. Sheffield (1987) notes that fear of potential violence is a form of social control, and that women often turn to self-defense as a means of empowerment, to

mitigate such fears. Ferraro (1996) illustrates that for the participants in his study, being aware of a friend or family member who had recently been victimized was more common than experiences of personal victimization. He argues that the imagined horror of sexual victimization is sufficient to spark elevated levels of fear in women, subsequently prompting them to take individual safety precautions.

2.3.3. Lack of trust in formal social control agencies

Formal social control agencies such as the criminal justice system are often criticized for failing to provide adequate protection and services to crime victims. Victims of sexual and/or physical abuse often face extensive barriers when seeking help from the courts. Resources are not always readily available to all victims of violence whether due to inaccessibility or unavailability. Additionally, victims do not always feel comfortable reporting the details of a traumatic event such as sexual victimization or intimate partner violence. Gartner and Macmillan (1995) point out that all types of violence against women are underreported in general, but that intimate partner violence is the least likely to be reported to the police. In many cases, when victims seek the help of formal social control agencies, offenders are not always punished to the full extent, as exemplified by the majority of sexual victimization cases. Rape laws have historically been predicated on the authenticity of the victim's testimony, as physical evidence is not always present. Due to severe issues of trauma, most notably post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), victims often run into difficulties when testifying, and it is then difficult to convict the assailant due to the strict standards of proof required (Dawson and Dinovitzer, 2001; Muraskin, 2012). This is often the case with domestic violence charges, where women often recant their testimonies, which lead to low rates of prosecution (Dawson and Dinovitzer, 2001). Traditionally, rape victims have been questioned about their sexual history when they do appear in court, and although this is now illegal unless specific to the case at hand, it still occurs and has resulted in a deep mistrust in the criminal justice system (Muraskin, 2012). To many victimized women, formal social control agencies have essentially failed them. It is more challenging to prove that an individual has been a rape victim as opposed to various other types of crime, such as burglary, where there is physical evidence. Additionally, due to the stigmatization

attached to sexual victimization, incidences of rape are underreported, with a common response from the courts being that “she asked for it” (Stanko, 1986). The lenient sentence recently handed down to Kenneth Rhodes in Manitoba for rape exemplifies this. Essentially, Judge Robert Dewar claimed that the victim was “asking for it” and that “sex was in the air” the night of her attack (National Post, 2011, February 24). He continued to cite her “suggestive attire and promiscuous conduct” as primary reasons for her victimization. Rhodes was given a two-year conditional sentence, which allows him to remain in the community. Media headlines following this incident such as “No jail for rapist because victim wanted to party” further cement the failure of the criminal justice system in aiding victims of sexual assault. Muraskin (2012) highlights that one percent of rape victims actually collect damages. She further maintains that there is a four percent chance that a rapist will be arrested, prosecuted and convicted of the offense, and that even when found guilty, the average sentence is about eleven months. In general, rape case attrition rates are quite high (ibid). This can often lead to a self-help mindset, where individuals choose to engage in informal methods of self-protection in order to minimize future risk of victimization. Felson (2002) asserts that ‘self-help’ is a rational, strategic response when the criminal justice system is ineffective at addressing grievances, such as intimate partner violence. He continues that in many cases, women will employ violence in self-defense against their partners rather than enlisting the assistance of formal social control agencies. Particularly in cases of intimate partner violence or sexual victimization, it is a constant struggle whether to report it to the criminal justice system, because too often, agents of formal social control are ill equipped to provide protection.

Society today can be defined as existing in a state of “neoliberalism”, where formal social control agencies engage in “managerialism” and “responsibilization” strategies. Formal social control mechanisms such as the criminal justice system have relegated the task of crime prevention to the individual level. Under neoliberal governance, individuals are expected to manage their own protection from crime and victimization (Simon, 2001). The public is encouraged to take various precautions, with some examples including installing alarm systems, having neighbourhood watch groups and living in gated communities (Christie, 1994). Crime is seen as a daily, routine part of everyday life and individuals are expected to be self-governing, rather than relying on

formal mechanisms of social control (Garland, 2001). This offloading of responsibility for crime prevention onto individuals can result in the public lacking trust in formal social control agencies, as it perpetuates the idea that only individuals can prevent their own victimization. This is quite problematic as it endorses the idea of informal social control and puts the responsibility on women for avoiding victimization.

Furthermore, self-protective behaviours can be viewed as a means of social control, where the constant fear of victimization causes women to manage their own safety. In a patriarchal society where women experience inequality by virtue of their gender, engaging in self-protection can result in promoting a “rape myth”. A “rape myth” refers to the idea that it is a woman’s responsibility to prevent her own victimization, and that if she is raped then it is because she did not engage in enough ‘precautionary’ measures. This shifts the responsibility onto the woman to manage her own protection and deflects attention away from the perpetrator.

2.3.4. Social Disorganization, High-Crime Neighbourhoods and Community Effects

In communities affected by social disorganization, rates of crime and delinquency are typically heightened (Cullen and Agnew, 2011; Sampson et al., 1997; Shaw and McKay, 1942). Within a city, these communities are not evenly distributed and ultimately some neighbourhoods will be less safe than others. In their classic study on social disorganization and inner-cities within Chicago, Shaw and McKay (1942) note that the social conditions of a community, rather than characteristics of individual perpetrators are important factors to consider when examining high-crime neighbourhoods. The scholars continue that the breakdown of social institutions in a region often leads to a general disruption in the social and physical health of the community. They provide examples of such disruptions, including a lack of control over youth in the area, and the emergence of multiples types of criminal organizations. Although the scholars maintain a male focus in their study, it would be rational for women in such areas to engage in various safety precautions to mitigate the effects of this social disorganization. This theory can be used to understand women’s feelings of insecurity, where in high-crime neighbourhoods, self-protective measures, such as weapon carrying is a rational calculation for minimizing danger.

Beyond micro-level reasons for weapon carrying, including personal preferences and personal experiences of victimization, the structural characteristics of a community are important to consider. In their study on collective efficacy and crime in Chicago, Sampson et al. (1997) examine the relationship between what they term “concentrated disadvantage” (structural conditions) and crime rates. The scholars illustrate that a high correlation exists between “informal social control”, such as the willingness of neighbours to intervene during an altercation and “social cohesion and trust”. They maintain that when neighbourhoods experience concentrated disadvantage, similar to Shaw and McKay’s notion of social disorganization, there is a lack of collective efficacy, and high crime rates ensue. Similarly, the scholars maintain a male focus in their research, however, these structural conditions can be viewed as conducive to women’s increased feelings of insecurity. The decision to engage in self-protective measures, such as weapon carrying is often conditioned by one’s structural position in their community or neighbourhood. These conditions of concentrated disadvantage can be seen as promoting a ‘self-help’ strategy of informal social control, where residents are responsible for their own safety. Women residing in these communities are at both a physical and social disadvantage, due to their gender and class status. A breakdown in community controls rooted in structural conditions may cause women to experience a heightened awareness of their potential vulnerability and likelihood of victimization. Weapon carrying could then be a structural adaptation to ensure their safety and an innovative means of controlling potentially dangerous situations.

2.3.5. Campus awareness campaigns

An extensive amount of the literature on victimization and self-protection narrowly focuses on college-aged women (Brecklin and Ullman, 2005; DeKeseredy, 2011; Hollander, 2010). The purpose of directing research towards this age group is because women ages eighteen to twenty-four are more likely to be sexually and physically assaulted than any other age group (DeKeseredy, 2011; Muraskin, 2012). This is due to a variety of factors, such as living away from home for the first time in residence, the pervasiveness of substance use in college settings and the frequent interactions with young men who are the most likely age group to engage in crime (ibid).

Based on his study using national victimization data in the U.S., Ferraro (1996) contends that fear of rape is particularly high among younger women because they often find themselves in a new, unfamiliar environments such as college, and this can cause elevated feelings of vulnerability. The incidence of victimization is quite high within the college environment. Subsequently, college-aged students are more likely to have access to violence and sexual awareness programs and information, due to the contained environment of college and universities (Hollander, 2010). Additionally, Brecklin (2004) demonstrates that various colleges and universities offer self-defense classes that count as credits. Such classes generally involve physical training, verbal self-defense mechanisms and the academic study of theoretical issues relating to violence against women (Hollander, 2010). In Hollander's (2010) study, the majority of participants in self-defense classes report that one of the primary reasons for enrollment was the awareness campaigns on campus and recommendations from friends who had previously taken the class.

2.4. Self-Defensive Tactics

Women often have a greater awareness of their vulnerability to violence than men do, and subsequently practice a variety of safety rituals in order to minimize their risk of victimization. Women's strategic self-protective measures generally include avoidance behaviours (such as staying clear of certain areas), learning self-defense techniques (such as martial arts) and carrying objects that can be utilized as weapons if needed (Stanko, 1990). The latter two strategies will be examined in greater detail. For women, daily life is a continuous process of risk assessment and understanding that as a woman, you are always vulnerable to victimization. This constant negotiation of risk may involve not walking home alone at night, varying routes home, avoiding dimly lit areas, having keys ready when getting into the car, or having a tape recording of a barking dog when home alone (ibid). Madden and Sokol (1997) maintain that self-protective behaviours such as enrolling in a self-defense class or carrying a weapon can enhance potential victims' feelings of control, while reducing anxiety. Self-protective strategies essentially allow women to regain control of their bodies, and to exert agency. They are a means of shaping one's life and moving past the stigmatizing label of 'victim'. Accordingly,

women's self-protective mechanisms are strategic reactions to male violence. They are a means of deconstructing society's idealized norms of femininity and enable women to challenge both stereotypical gender roles and gendered violence (McCaughey, 1998). Self-defensive tactics such as weapon carrying or partaking in a self-defense class transform the female body into a weapon of resistance, rather than a victim of patriarchal power. However, many women face immense barriers due to traditional gender scripts of femininity that promote compliance and passivity.

Although there are a variety of self-protective measures that women engage in prior to any experiences of attempted or completed rape, research indicates that the use of physical force can be beneficial against an assailant (Atkeson et al., 1989). Amir (1971) was among the first scholars to examine victim behaviour during rape, and found that forty-five percent of participants in his study resisted rape by employing verbal and/or physical strategies. Verbal strategies include screaming or pleading with the offender, while physical strategies include trying to escape or physically fighting back (ie. punching, hitting, and so on). Subsequent research demonstrates that physical strategies tend to be more successful than verbal ones (Amir, 1971; Bart and O'Brien, 1985; Brecklin and Ullman, 2004; Quinsey and Upfold, 1985). However, when the offender uses a weapon, physical strategies are generally rendered useless, and the victim is less likely to fight back, and if she does, it is usually unsuccessfully (ibid). Using data from the National Crime Victimization Survey, Clay-Warner (2002) examines the situational effectiveness of protective strategies employed by women during an attempted or completed rape. She finds that women are more successful at defending themselves when their assailant is a stranger rather than someone known to them (such as an acquaintance, relative, friend, and so on). She continues that utilizing physical force is among the most important strategies for escaping a potential rape. Zoucha-Jensen (1993) also holds that physical protective action is more useful in thwarting rape rather than verbal and non-forceful tactics. It is evident from past research that physical protective action is a valuable tool for rape avoidance.

2.4.1. Carrying Weapons

Self-defense mechanisms in Canada are circumscribed by more restrictions than in the United States, such that a wide range of defensive weapons are prohibited. Some examples include mace, pepper spray, and small handguns (Mauser, 1996). Homsher (2002) notes that for many American women, the mere act of owning a gun is comforting and allows them to feel as though they have control over their own protection, and many handguns are designed to fit in a purse. In Canada, it is illegal to carry a handgun for protection, and registered firearms such as hunting guns must be securely locked and unloaded in one's residence when not in use (*ibid*). Studies of Canadian women's defensive tactics is a relatively recent area of inquiry, and a more extensive literature base on the subject exists in the United States. Nonetheless, it is important to examine both the theoretical and practical implications of weapon carrying for women. In their research on the Southern United States, Felson and Paré (2010) propose that Southern women may find it more strategic to carry a weapon on their person due to the violent tendencies of the Southern male population. In examining Canadian victimization data from the General Social Survey in 1999 and 2004, Paré and Korosec (2010) assert that women are more likely to carry a defensive tool, such as mace whereas men are more likely to carry a gun. The scholars maintain that women are only slightly less likely to practice martial arts than men. In presenting this data, the authors suggest that Canada and the United States may be more similar than they appear in terms of self-protective measures that women take. Although illegal in Canada, various women's advocacy groups continue to sell tools such as bear spray (Mauser, 1996). Sacco (1995) also argues that women are more likely than men to carry a weapon on their person for self-defense purposes. Based on data from the 1993 General Social Survey, he reports that seventeen percent of women routinely carry some sort of tool for self-protection, compared to seven percent of men.

Studies in the United States, Canada and Britain highlight a variety of opportunistic weapons that women often carry in case needed for self-defense purposes (Mauser, 1996; Sacco, 1995; Stanko, 1990). Examples include lit cigarettes, holding keys between fingers when walking alone at night, knitting needles, umbrellas, personal alarms, pocketknives, penknives and mace. Stanko (1990) notes that the majority of women in her research indicate that carrying these "tools" offers a comforting illusion of safety, but that they would not know how to employ the weapons if confronted. For

women, carrying self-defense “tools” is about surviving physically, socially and sexually. These tools are a means of increasing power when met with threat. For women, weapon carrying is as much about the emotional connotations attached to it, as it is the physical. These tools are equally about being able to ward off danger and feel secure. When men tend to carry weapons, it is usually about exerting their masculinity, and proving their capability in combat. Women carry weapons to feel safer, increase their confidence and meet male intimidation (ibid).

2.4.2. Self-Defense Classes

Research demonstrates that there are quite a few barriers that women encounter in terms of participating in self-defense classes such as cost, time commitment, a lack of assertiveness, and trauma due to past experiences of victimization (Hollander, 2010). More often than not, these classes are aimed at middle-class women, or are offered on university campuses. In terms of time commitment, women may find it difficult to rearrange their time schedules for lengthy lessons. Additionally, many women are reluctant to enroll in self-defense classes because they have been socialized to avoid aggression (Madden and Sokol, 1997). Subsequently, men teach many of these classes, which can be a significant source of strain for a female participant who has experienced victimization (Brecklin, 2004). DeWelde (2003) discusses three primary motivations for enrolling in self-defense classes, including fear of victimization (most common), entering a new environment (such as college or traveling), and past experiences of victimization. It is difficult to determine the extent of the correlation between past experiences of victimization and enrollment in self-defense classes. It may in fact be that students in such classes are more willing to divulge their histories of victimization. There is likely a much higher percentage of women who have been victimized who for various reasons such as a lack of money, do not participate in these classes. In this sense, an overrepresentation of female rape or violence victims in a class does not necessarily assume a causal relationship between these two variables.

There are some notable differences between self-defense classes for men and women. Men’s self-defense classes are geared towards creating entertainment and learning specialized techniques, such as in the case of Ultimate Fighting Championship

(UFC) (McCaughey, 1998). Women's classes are about learning practical techniques that can be used to disable an assailant while allowing the victim enough time to get away. Brecklin and Ullman (2005) list some general proponents of women's classes including, how to create an impromptu weapon from tools such as keys or a comb, and how to maximize certain body parts in combat against the assailant's vulnerable body parts. Self-defense classes geared towards women are intended to be simple, practical and effective regardless of size, previous experience or physical strength (Brecklin, 2004). Such classes tend to involve a combination of traditional martial arts techniques such as karate with modern self-defense techniques including wrestling and boxing (Angelman et al., 2009). The purpose of women's self-defense classes is not about learning how to fight, it is about learning how to defend and escape.

2.5. Problematic areas in the literature on victimization and self-protection

A few problems arise when examining the literature on victimization and self-protective measures among women. Firstly, the research assumes a normative heterosexual standard, where only male-on-female violence is looked at. Violence perpetrated by homosexual women, and violence perpetrated against women due to their sexual preference is not addressed. The victimization of lesbians is almost completely absent from the literature in regards to self-protection. Furthermore, a discussion on interpersonal conflicts between heterosexual women is noticeably absent from the literature. Female-on-female fighting is often seen as cause of a moral panic, and is assumed to rarely occur. However, conflicts such as love-triangle quarrels could easily cause women to engage in self-defensive tactics and fear for their safety. A discussion on both heterosexual and homosexual conflicts among women and engagement in self-defensive tactics is nonexistent in the literature.

Secondly, a middle-class standard is often applied in the research on victimization and self-protection. Research samples tend to only include those enrolled in self-defense classes for example, which does not address those women who may wish to take such precautions but cannot afford to. Much of the literature on women and self-defense class enrollment does not address the fact that enrolling in such a class is a middle class behaviour. The majority of women enrolled in a self-defense class are most likely of a

middle-class background. From this viewpoint, most middle-class women probably view a potential male attacker as a stranger from likely a lower-class background. Conversely, women of a lower socioeconomic status are more likely to interact with these lower class marginalized males whom middle-class women often label as potential assailants. The literature on women and self-protection needs to address that women of a lower SES background will most likely carry a weapon for protection whereas middle-class women will gravitate more towards a self-defense class. Additionally, when research is focused on university and college samples, the issue of socioeconomic status is once again problematic because not everyone can afford to attend post-secondary schooling. Lack of access to self-protection resources needs to be addressed more, as many of these studies are not generalizable to the public.

Thirdly, there is an inherent sampling bias in the majority of studies on women's use of self-defense tactics and perceived feelings of safety. These studies generally employ non-random samples where specific populations are targeted, such as women enrolled in a self-defense class, women who are incarcerated or those attending university. These samples lack external validity because they are not representative of all women. Participants in these samples will most likely gravitate towards feeling unsafe or engaging in self-protective measures. The problem with these samples is that they do not explain self-defensive measures among all women, but rather focus on specific groups of women that are more likely than the general public to engage in these behaviours. Additionally, sampling is an issue when scholars use large-scale victimization data such as nationwide surveys, because certain groups of women, arguably those most marginalized will not be included, such as homeless women.

Furthermore, race and ethnicity are not always addressed. When examining college campuses, it is important to consider that the majority of colleges and universities are comprised of mostly Caucasian students, which adds subsequent bias to the research. For example, in Hollander's (2010) large-scale longitudinal study of self-defense among university women, eighty-nine percent of the participants are white, and only 0.3 percent are African American. Not all women share equal risk of victimization, and certain groups of women are more vulnerable (Searles and Berger, 1987). Women at the margins of society, such as those unemployed, homeless, or of visible minority status are more

likely to experience victimization due to the intersection of various statuses (DeKeseredy, 2011). For example, First Nations women are arguably among those groups most victimized in Canadian society, yet are often neglected in academic research. DeKeseredy (2011) notes that First Nations women are four times more likely to be sexually victimized than non-First Nations women.

Essentially, the research on women's victimization and self-protective strategies is too narrowly focused on white, middle-class, heterosexual women. It is often assumed that women as a group share similar experiences regarding victimization, which is true to an extent. As a group, women are more vulnerable to both physical and sexual victimization. However, the chief problem here is that the relevant literature treats both genders as dichotomous groups and rarely addresses differences between women. There are hierarchies of domination and oppression that exist between women, and the ways in which women experience different structural statuses such as race, socioeconomic status or sexual preference is rarely examined. How various groups of women experience victimization and subsequently engage in self-protective strategies is important and must be taken into account.

2.6. The Current Study

Using the logistic regression technique, this research will examine whether women's self-protective behaviours in Canada are influenced by past experiences of victimization. Specifically, this research will identify whether women's feelings of insecurity and engagement in self-protective behaviours (such as weapon carrying or enrolling in a self-defense class) are influenced by experiences of violence generally or sexual and/or physical victimization specifically. This study will utilize data from the 2009 General Social Survey (GSS) on victimization in Canada, which will allow for a more general perspective on the relationship between past experiences of victimization and self-protective behaviours among Canadian women.

To assess this relationship, the following hypotheses are presented:

Hypothesis 1 – Past experiences of victimization within the last five years (including physical and/or sexual) will be positively associated with self-protective behaviour among Canadian women in comparison with non-victims.

Competing Hypotheses

Hypothesis 2 – **The specific impact of sexual violence:** women who have experienced sexual victimization within the past five years are more likely to engage in self-protective behaviour than women who have experienced physical violence.

Hypothesis 3 – **The general impact of violence:** women who have experienced physical and/or sexual victimization within the past five years will have similar levels of self-protective behaviour.

Chapter 3

3. Research methodology and analytic technique

3.1. The General Social Survey on Victimization

The current study utilizes the 2009 wave of data from the General Social Survey (GSS). The GSS is a countrywide survey that includes all ten provinces, but excludes the three territories (Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut). Additional research is conducted with the three territories independently from the main survey, but for the purposes of this study, only data on the ten provinces will be used. The chief goal of the GSS is to examine a variety of social trends in Canada from an aggregate level. Specifically pertaining to victimization, the GSS broadly examines trends such as social networks, perceptions of personal safety, incidence of victimization (including intimate partner violence and sexual assault), Internet victimization, crime prevention, and provides information on socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The target population of the GSS includes individuals ages fifteen and older, and excludes those residing in full-time institutions (such as psychiatric hospitals or prisons for example). However, since this study aims to examine victimization among women, only female respondents are included. Accordingly, the total population of respondents in the GSS is approximately 19,500 while the sample of women is 10,694. From within the total sample of women, the victims' sample includes 715 women. Data collection methods for the GSS include 'computer assisted telephone interviewing' (CATI), with households selected using 'random digit dialing' (RDD). From each household selected, a member of at least fifteen years of age is chosen to participate. Respondents are then interviewed in their language of choice, and proxy interviews are not permitted.

The current study specifically focuses on women's experiences of *physical* and *sexual* victimization in the past five years. Other experiences of victimization such as cyber victimization, robbery, and stalking for example will not be examined. The purpose of this is to narrow the focus to experiences of interpersonal victimization that include physical contact. Although the GSS does include data on victimization over the lifetime,

this study will concentrate exclusively on experiences of victimization within the past five years to ensure that the data is as accurate as possible. Often times due to experiences of trauma, it becomes difficult for women to recall details of their victimization. By focusing on the last five years, the respondents will likely have a more precise recollection of their experiences. The utility with employing only the 2009 wave of data from the GSS is to provide a current analysis of women's experiences of victimization and their subsequent engagement in self-defensive behaviours.

From a theoretical standpoint, female empowerment through self-defense class enrollment is a recent phenomenon (DeWelde, 2003). Younger women often enroll in these classes through the university or college they are attending. Accordingly, many universities have only recently implemented such programs. More broadly, scholars are now beginning to focus on women's engagement in self-defense measures in general (Brecklin, 2004). Of the minimal research that does exist on women and self-defense measures, the focus is often on American data. This makes a current examination of this trend in Canada quite pertinent.

The GSS is useful for examining aggregate level trends in large populations. It offers a general analysis of the Canadian population as a whole, and provides specific information on different regions across Canada. It allows for a comparison between these different populations, such as rural/ urban regions, age groups, marital statuses, and so on. The GSS is valuable for empirically assessing theoretical claims such as the relationship between female sexual and physical victimization, and engagement in self-defense measures. The survey itself is relatively unobtrusive and easy to administer. Particularly in terms of victimization, it is advantageous for gathering information that individuals may not have reported to the formal criminal justice system. Victimization surveys often elicit a more valid picture of crime rather than official police data due to victims feeling more at ease with reporting whether due to lingering trauma, or embarrassment (Booth et al., 1977). The GSS provides significant data on the rate of victimization, which is quite valuable in formulating social policies regarding women and the criminal justice system, and for avoiding the dark figure of crime from police data.

There are a few notable limitations with the GSS. Firstly, the survey tends to exclude certain populations that can be classified as among those most vulnerable in

society. Individuals residing in institutions on a full-time basis are excluded. This is problematic for incarcerated women, as they are more likely than the general public to engage in self-defense behaviours. The majority of incarcerated women have been physically (68%) and/or sexually (53%) victimized, and have subsequently taken self-protective measures (Comack, 2006). They are also more likely to have previously dwelled and/or worked in unsafe neighbourhoods (sex workers for example), which increases their likelihood of engaging in self-protective behaviours. First Nations populations are also underrepresented in the GSS due to their geographic locations in remote areas of the country. This is a major disadvantage as many First Nations individuals generally are considered “fourth world citizens”, where they experience third world conditions in a first world country (Walters and Simoni, 2002). First Nations women are at a further disadvantage by virtue of their gender and ethnicity, and are more likely than women in general to experience both physical and sexual victimization (Balfour and Comack, 2006). Also, due to the nature of the GSS, homeless people are excluded. Respondents are contacted through their home telephone line, which is unfeasible among the homeless population. This is problematic because homeless individuals have a much higher risk of victimization and subsequent engagement in self-defense measures than the general population, due to the nature of not having a permanent home. The GSS maintains a middle-class bias, as those of a lower SES are less likely to own a home telephone. Similarly, women who are currently living at a women’s shelter due to intimate partner violence are excluded from the survey, as they would not be at home at the time of the interview. With the exclusion of such vulnerable populations in the data, the GSS is to an extent biased. However, the GSS is still the most representative source of information about victimization for the majority of Canadians.

Secondly, contacting respondents through a home telephone line is problematic. With the rising popularity of cell phones, many individuals do not own landlines anymore. Particularly among the university and college-age generation, such individuals are more likely to own cellular phones when they are away at school. This is a major barrier when collecting data on victimization, as university and college-age women are at a much higher risk of victimization than all other age groups (DeWelde, 2003).

Lastly, there are a few general methodological limitations with the collection of

survey data. The non-response rates of surveys can be high, with individuals choosing not to participate, and those who do choose to participate may skip questions. The validity of the data is questionable to an extent, where respondents may misinterpret a question, or provide inaccurate responses due to issues surrounding social desirability or trauma. Especially with victimization, respondents may not feel comfortable divulging the specifics of a devastating incident, due to shame or embarrassment. Particularly, it may be possible that the researchers administering the survey are not trained in issues regarding violence against women. Therefore they may not be as successful in making female respondents feel at ease with divulging such information. Or respondents may have forgotten or blocked out the incident and therefore cannot provide truthful responses. On the other hand, because of the large sample size, it is still possible to estimate relationships between victimization and self-defense, even if some incidents are underreported.

Regardless of the limitations with the GSS, it is quite a valuable tool for examining trends in crime and victimization across the country. It provides useful information regarding socio-demographic characteristics of both victims and offenders, types of crime and victimization, and regional variation. In general, large-scale victimization surveys allow for the quantification of these social trends, which is important when determining social and criminal justice policies. The GSS provides a substantial database on the extent of victimization in Canada, and this empirical assessment is beneficial in determining how to mitigate the incidence of victimization in society.

3.2. Variables

This study will focus exclusively on the practice of self-protective measures among women. It will be determined whether self-protective behaviour among women is a strategic response to physical and/or sexual victimization independently or mutually, or due to other factors entirely.

The dependant variable is self-protective behaviour and is measured by three outcomes: enrolling in a self-defense class, carrying a weapon or object with the intention of using it for protection and the latter two behaviours combined for 'overall protection'.

This variable is measured using the following indicators: “Have you every taken a self-defence course to protect yourself from crime?” and “Do you routinely carry something to defend yourself or to alert other people to increase your level of safety?” Individuals who have engaged in these self-protective measures are coded as 1 on the self-defense or the weapon carrying variables, whereas those who have not are coded as 0. As mentioned, a combined variable of overall self-protection was also created, which includes both behaviours. If a respondent indicates that they have engaged in any sort of self-protection (self-defense class enrollment and/or weapon carrying) than she is coded as 1 for the overall protection variable. If she has not engaged in any type of self-protection, she is coded as 0.

The independent variables are physical victimization and sexual victimization within the past five years. Sexual victimization is measured by asking respondents about incidences of sexual violence in the last five years by an ex and/or current spouse, and in general. This variable is measured by asking respondents if they have experienced any unwanted sexual activity and/or violence by an ex and/or current spouse/partner. They are also questioned about the most serious incident of sexual victimization they have experienced in the past five years outside of an intimate relationship. Respondents who indicate that they have been sexually victimized are coded as 1, whereas those who have not are coded as 0. Similarly, physical victimization is measured by asking respondents about incidences of physical violence by an ex and/or current spouse/partner and in general over the past five years. In terms of victimization perpetuated by an ex-spouse/partner, this variable is measured by asking respondents if an ex-spouse/partner has ever threatened to hurt her, or has physically assaulted her, including throwing objects, pushing, grabbing, shoving, slapping, kicking, hitting, biting, beating, choking, and being held at gunpoint and/or knifepoint. In terms of physical victimization in general, respondents are asked about the most serious victimization reported in the past twelve months, excluding spousal/partner and ex-spousal/partner abuse. Responses where individuals have experienced incident of physical victimization are coded as 1, and those who have not are coded as 0. Physical and sexual victimization are examined in the same models to determine if they independently influence women’s self-protective behaviours. It is important to note that some respondents have experienced both sexual and physical

victimization: they are coded 1 on both variables (versus women who experience no victimization, which is the reference category).

Due to the gendered nature of violence, it is expected that physical and sexual victimization will have a mutually strong and statistically significant effect on self-protective behaviours. It is not known, however, whether one form of victimization has a stronger impact on self-protection than the other, or whether they have similar effects. In addition, it may be possible that women's self-protective measures are due to a general insecurity or fear of crime, not specific victimization. This will be elaborated on in the discussion section.

There are control variables in the current study relating to socio-demographic characteristics, region of residence, and perceptions of safety. Firstly, gender is controlled by design: all respondents are women. All respondents are fifteen years of age or older, and age is measured with fifteen groups, with the youngest ranging from 15 to 17, and the oldest being 80 and over. Next, marital status is controlled for, as women are more likely to experience both physical and/or sexual victimization by a partner/ex-partner (Ferraro and Johnson, 1983). Gartner et al. (2002) note that estrangement and common-law status are associated with a higher risk of spouse killings of women. The scholars point out that women are at a much higher risk of victimization when they are leaving a relationship. Additionally, single women often report being more fearful for their safety due to the fact that they may live alone (Stanko, 1990). Next, women who live with a child/children under the age of fourteen are coded 1 on the variable "living with children", and 0 otherwise. The purpose of this is that women are often quite protective of their children, and may take various precautions (such as owning a weapon) to ensure the safety of their family. This is particularly important for single women with children, who may experience increased pressure to protect their family. A problem with this survey question, however, is that the GSS only asks about children under the age of fourteen, while an individual is not considered an adult legally until the age of eighteen.

Region of residence is controlled for, including rural versus urban communities, and whether respondents live in the Atlantic, Quebec, Ontario, Prairies, or British Columbia regions. Various scholars demonstrate that self-protective behaviours may be stronger in certain geographic areas, such as in the case of the Southern United States for

example (D'Antonio et al., 2010; Ellison, 1991; Nisbett and Cohen, 1996). These scholars demonstrate that individuals socialized in the South, learn to approve of violence in a wide range of situations and self-defensive behaviour is often viewed as normative. Region of residence is also coded as a dummy variable, and Ontario is used as the reference group. Ontario was chosen as the reference group because of its central location in the country and its average crime rate in comparison to the high rates of crime in the West, and low rates in the East.

Next, general insecurity and fear of crime is controlled for. Prior research shows that women often engage in self-protection because they are aware of their vulnerability as the 'physically weaker' gender (Felson, 2002). In addition, the majority of violent offenders are males. Accordingly, perceptions of neighbourhood crime and safety are controlled for, including how safe respondents feel generally, walking home alone and being home at night (coded 0-1 for safe-unsafe). As a social support measure, the proportion of neighbours the respondent knows is controlled for as well, including "most/many" (coded 1) or "few/none" (coded 0). The average number of evening activities that a respondent attends in a month is controlled for, and is divided into three categories including less than 15, 15 to 29, and more than 30. The "less than 15" group is the reference category. The purpose of this is to separate those individuals who are in public more often at night, and therefore at a higher risk of victimization.

Next, socioeconomic status is controlled for, which includes level of education and total household income. Respondents are asked to indicate their highest level of education, which is important as many women enroll in self-defense classes through the educational institution they are attending. Respondents are separated into three groups of educational attainment including, a bachelor's degree at university or higher, college/trade school/ some university, and finally high school or less (the missing data will be included in this group). This variable is coded as a dummy variable, with the university or higher category coded as the reference group. Family income is separated into three categories including, high (\$60,000 or more), medium (\$20-60,000) and low (below \$20,000). An unknown category will also be employed because 21% of the data is missing for this variable. This is likely because some respondents may not feel comfortable divulging their income, and those with unstable employment may not know

their annual income. This variable will be coded as a dummy variable, with the high-income category used as the reference group. It is important to include family income in this project, as access to certain self-protective mechanisms can be costly, such as buying weapons or paying for self-defense classes.

Finally, visible minority status is controlled for, as prior research demonstrates that such individuals sometimes have higher rates of violent victimization (Comack, 2006). Due to the intersection of their race/ethnicity and gender, visible minority women are among those groups more likely to be victimized (ibid). Although examined independently in the GSS, visible minority status and aboriginal status will be included in one variable, with the Caucasian (white) category as the reference group. This is because the samples are too small to analyze different visible minority groups separately.

3.3. Analytic Technique

The data from the 2009 GSS on victimization will be analyzed using SPSS software. First, a descriptive table with percentages is presented, and then the multivariate models are presented. The statistical technique used in this study is the logistic regression. The logistic regression is a common technique for estimating relationships between a binary dependent variable (0-1), such as practicing self defense or not, or carrying a weapon or not, and a series of predictors (independent and control variables). An advantage of the logistic regression over simpler techniques is that the effects of other predictors are taken into account when estimating the net effect of a specific variable. For example, the impact of sexual violence on weapon carrying can be estimated, while taking into account the effects of physical violence, general insecurity, and socioeconomic status. Another advantage of the logistic regression is that the regression coefficients can be transformed into odds ratios that are easy to interpret as relative risks or relative chances.

Chapter 4

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

In Table 1, the descriptive statistics for the sample of women age fifteen and over ($n = 10,694$) presented. It should be noted that these results indicate engagement in self-protective behaviour only within the last five years. In terms of the dependant variables, 11.6% ($n = 1237$) of the women indicated that they have taken a self-defense course for the purposes of protection. With regards to weapon carrying, 26.1% ($n = 2789$) of the women specified that they have routinely carried a weapon or tool in order to increase their perception of personal safety (ie. pocket knife, pen, whistle, and so on). When examining self-defense course enrollment and weapon carrying concurrently (overall protection), approximately a third of the women (32.3%; $n = 3451$) have engaged in some sort of self-protective behaviour. In terms of the independent variables, 2.2% ($n = 239$) of the women have experienced some sort of sexual victimization, whereas 5.1% ($n = 546$) have been physically victimized. Given that this study focuses on victimization within the past five years, these estimates are conservative. Participants may have been victimized prior to the five-year mark, so it is possible that these estimates are higher than reported in this study.

The majority of participants fall within the middle to old age range (35-69). This is probably due to older adults being more likely to own a home telephone, rather than a cellular phone. The low number of participants in the 18 to 24 range may be due to these individuals being away at college or university, and therefore possessing a cellular phone as opposed to a home phone.

In terms of marital status, close to half of the women (47%, $n = 5025$) indicated being single, and 53% ($n = 5669$) specified that they are currently in a relationship. Furthermore, the majority (74.3%; $n = 7941$) of the women indicated that they do not have children under age 14, and a quarter of them indicated that they do have one or more children under the age of 14 (25.7%; $n = 2753$). However, this may be due to the majority of participants being middle to old age, and therefore having children older than 14.

Next, the results illustrate that a large majority of respondents are Caucasian (87.7%; n = 9374), and that 12.3% (n = 1320) are visible minorities.

Table 1. Descriptive Results (n = 10, 694)

<u>Dependent variables</u>	<u>(%)</u>
Self-defense course	
Yes	11.6
No	88.4
Weapon carrying	
Yes	26.1
No	73.1
Overall Protection	
Yes	32.3
No	67.7
<u>Independent Variables</u>	
Sexual victimization	
Yes	2.2
No	97.8
Physical victimization	
Yes	5.1
No	94.9
<u>Control Variables</u>	
Age	
15-17	2.7
18-19	1.7
20-24	4.5
25-29	6
30-34	7.5
35-39	8.3
40-44	8.6
45-49	9.4
50-54	9.4
55-59	9.7
60-64	9.2
65-69	7.2
70-74	5.4
75-79	4.5
+80	5.9
Marital Status	
Single	47
Not single	53
Children (age 14 and under)	
Yes	25.7
No	74.3
Visible minority status	
Yes	12.3
No	87.7
Income	

Low (below \$20,000)	10.2
Middle (\$20,000-60,000)	32.7
High (Above \$60,000)	36.1
Unknown	21
Level of education	
Less than high school	33.9
College/ trade school	42.2
University	23.9
Place of residence	
Urban	74.8
Rural	25.2
Region of residence	
Atlantic	19.3
Quebec	18.9
Ontario	27.8
Prairies	24
British Columbia	10.4
Evening activities per month	
Under 15	28.8
15 to 29	47
More than 30	24.2
General insecurity with personal safety	
High	35.5
Low	64.5
Fear of neighbourhood crime	
High	7.4
Low	92.6
% of neighbours known	
Most/many	48.6
Few/none	51.4

For family income, the results illustrate that most women fall within the high and medium income categories, with approximately a third of the sample in the \$20,000-60,000 range (32.7%; n = 3499) and just over another third in the above \$60,000 range (36.1%; n = 3855). A minority indicated family earnings of under \$20,000 a year (10.2%; n = 1094), and 21% (n = 2246) did not specify which category they fall in. This outstanding 21% may be due to respondents feeling uncomfortable revealing their income, because it is quite high or quite low, or not knowing their annual income.

In terms of level of education, the results are dispersed, although 'college/ trade school' (42.2%; n = 4513) seems to hold a slight precedence over the 'high school or less' and 'university' categories. About a third of the sample indicated that they have a high school degree or less (33.9 %; n = 3624), whereas just under a quarter (23.9; n = 2494) specified that they are university-educated. However, given that the highest

percentage of respondents fall within the ages of 45 to 64, the above results regarding education credentials is not surprising. Holding a university degree has only become commonplace within the past thirty years (give or take), where young adults today are much more likely to have an undergraduate degree than in previous generations.

When examining geographic location, the results demonstrate that three quarters of the respondents (74.8%; n = 8001) dwell in urban locations, while only a quarter (25.2%; n = 2693) reside in rural areas. With more people populating urban centres, it is possible that both physical and/or sexual victimization occur here more often due to increased interactions. Additionally, urban centres are more likely to include a variety of self-defense courses, and more access to weapons, in comparison to rural communities. This will be discussed later. In terms of region of residence, the greatest number of women resides in Ontario (27.8%; n = 2916), with the least amount of women living in British Columbia (10.4%; n = 1115). The number of women living in the Prairies is only minimally less than that of Ontario (24%; n = 2571), and the Atlantic (19.3%; n = 2069) and Quebec (18.9%; n = 2023) regions are quite similar in their numbers.

In regards to the number of evening activities partaken in during any given month, just under half of the women (47%; n = 5028) indicated 15 to 29. The results for the under 15 activities category (28.8%; n = 3080), and more than 30 activities (24.2%; n = 2586) were similar.

The measure of general insecurity was high, as just over a third of the women (35.5%; n = 3797) indicated dissatisfaction with their personal safety. Conversely, perceived neighbourhood criminality was low, with only 7.2% (n = 787) of women indicating high levels of crime in their neighbourhood. Accordingly, approximately half of the women (48.4%; n = 5202) specified that they know many, if not most of their neighbours.

The results demonstrate that a considerable number of women have taken a self-defense course and/ or carried a weapon on their person for the purposes of protection. Although more women have carried some sort of weapon for protection (as opposed to enrolled in a self-defense course), when both variables are combined, one in three women have engaged in self-protective behaviour. The following section will employ a binary

logistic regression to determine which factors contribute to women engaging in self-protective behaviours.

4.2. Multivariate analyses

Table 2 presents the first model, which looks at whether experiences of sexual or physical victimization (independently) contribute to enrollment in a self-defense class, carrying a weapon and both the previous variables combined (overall protection). This model essentially compares victims of violence (sexual and physical) to non-victims in the sample.

Table 2 (Model 1). Logistic regression predicting the impact of victimization on self-protection (n = 10, 694).

	<u>Self-defense</u> Exp(B)	<u>Weapon</u> Exp(B)	<u>Overall Protection</u> Exp(B)
Constant	0.123**	0.330**	0.445**
Sexual victimization	2.092**	2.424**	2.861**
Physical victimization	1.834**	2.106**	2.168**

** = p < 0.01
* = p < 0.05

Firstly, the model illustrates that women who have been sexually victimized are approximately two times (2.1) more likely than non-victims to enroll in a self-defense class, while those who have been physically victimized are 1.8 times more likely. Both results are quite significant ($p < 0.01$), with sexual victimization being a slightly higher contributing factor. Secondly, it shows that women who have experienced sexual victimization are 2.4 times more likely to carry a weapon than non-victims, whereas those who have experienced physical victimization are 2.1 times more likely. These results are also quite significant ($p < 0.01$), with sexual victimization once again holding a little more precedence than the latter. Lastly, it examines the effects of victimization on engaging in overall protection. Accordingly, women who have been sexually victimized are 2.9 times more likely to engage in overall protection than non-victims, and those who have been physically victimized are 2.2 times more likely. Both results are positive and

significant ($p < 0.01$), which indicates that victimization (sexual slightly more) highly influences women's choices to engage in self-protective behaviours. Alternatively, this table also illustrates that there is a negatively significant relationship between being a non-victim and engaging in all three self-protective behaviours.

Table 3 presents the second model, which adds the control variables to isolate the effects of victimization on women's enrollment in a self-defense class, weapon-carrying, and overall protective strategies.

Table 3 (Model 2). Logistic regression predicting the impact of victimization on self-protection and control variables (n = 10, 694)

	<u>Self-defense</u> Exp(B)	<u>Weapon</u> Exp(B)	<u>Overall Protection</u> Exp(B)
Constant	0.338**	0.365**	0.708**
Sexual victimization	1.585**	1.967**	2.203**
Physical victimization	1.503**	1.817**	1.798**
Age	0.910**	0.954**	0.936**
Marital status (single)	1.231**	1.071	1.138**
Children (age 14 and younger)	0.862 ^a	0.870*	0.840**
Visible minority	0.718**	0.665**	0.652**
Income			
Low (less than \$20,000)	0.752*	0.780**	0.750**
Medium (\$20,000-60,000)	0.841*	1.065	1.000
Unknown	1.066	0.988	0.978
Education			
High school or less	0.341**	0.931	0.702**
College/ trade school	0.731**	1.188**	0.984
Rural	0.948	1.071	1.018
Region			
Atlantic	0.535**	0.683**	0.657**
Quebec	0.758**	0.765**	0.767**
Prairies	0.993	1.024	1.060
British Columbia	1.189	1.159	1.216**
Evening activities per month			
15-29 night activities	1.127	1.112	1.139*
+30 night activities	1.388**	1.215**	1.292**
General insecurity	1.289**	1.868**	1.691**
High Neighbourhood crime	1.210	1.257**	1.276**
Many Neighbours known	1.304**	1.109*	1.136**

** = $p < 0.01$

* = $p < 0.05$

a = $p = 0.052$

In this model, the effects of physical and sexual victimization are somewhat smaller than in the previous model. However, the effects of physical and sexual victimization are still strong and significant in comparison to the non-victim group. Women who have been sexually victimized are 1.6 times more likely to enroll in a self-defense class, 2 times more likely to carry a weapon, and 2.2 times more likely to engage in overall protection than non-victims. In regards to physical victimization, victims are 1.5 times more likely to enroll in a self-defense class, 1.8 times more likely to carry a weapon, and 1.8 times more likely to engage in overall protection than non-victims. Similar to the first model, sexual victimization has a bit more of an influence on women's self-protection.

The results demonstrate that age is a negative predictor ($p < 0.01$) on all three dependant variables. The results illustrate that as women age, they are less likely to engage in self-protective measures. Marital status is extremely significant in predicting enrollment in a self-defense class ($p < 0.01$) and overall protection ($p < 0.01$). So, women who are single are 1.2 times more likely to enroll in a self-defense class and 1.1 times more likely to engage in overall protection than women who are in a romantic relationship. Having children is a negative predictor for engaging in self-protective strategies. Women who have children under age 14 are 14% less likely to enroll in a self-defense class ($p = 0.052$), 13% less likely to carry a weapon ($p < 0.05$), and 16% less likely to engage in overall protection ($p < 0.01$).

Visible minority status is a strong negative predictor for all three variables ($p < 0.01$). Women of visible minority status are significantly less likely to enroll in a self-defense class, carry a weapon and engage in overall protection in comparison to Caucasian women. They are 28% less likely to enroll in a self-defense class, 33% less likely to carry a weapon, and 35% less likely to engage in overall protection. This pattern is quite strong, which suggests that visible minority women may have less access to weapons or self-defense classes. Additionally, visible minority women may be less likely to engage in self-protection due to cultural norms that differ for Caucasian women.

In regards to level of income, the low-income category (less than \$20,000) is a

significantly negative predictor for all three variables. Women in the low-income category are 25% less likely to enroll in a self-defense class ($p < 0.05$), 22% less likely to carry a weapon ($p < 0.01$), and 25% less likely to engage in overall protection ($p < 0.01$). This is likely due to self-defense classes and weapons being costly. Women in the medium income category are also less likely to enroll in a self-defense course ($p < 0.05$).

When examining level of education, possessing a high school degree or less is a negative predictor for enrolling in a self-defense class ($p < 0.01$) and engaging in overall protection ($p < 0.01$). In fact, women who have a high school degree or less are 66% less likely to enroll in a self-defense class, and 30% less likely to engage in overall protection than those who have a university degree. This is likely due to self-defense classes being more readily available in university institutions. Women who have completed a college or trade school diploma are 27% less likely to enroll in a self-defense class ($p < 0.01$), but are 1.2 times more likely than university educated women to carry a weapon ($p < 0.01$).

With regards to region of residence, living in the Atlantic ($p < 0.01$) and Quebec ($p < 0.01$) regions is a significantly negative predictor for engaging in self-protection on all three dependant variables. Women living in the Atlantic region are 46% ($p < 0.01$) less likely to enroll in a self-defense class, 32% ($p < 0.01$) less likely to carry a weapon, and 34% ($p < 0.01$) less likely to engage in overall protection. Similarly, women in Quebec are approximately 24% less likely to enroll in a self-defense class ($p < 0.01$), carry a weapon ($p < 0.01$) and engage in overall protection ($p < 0.01$). Dwelling in the Prairies, has no significant effect on engaging in self-protective behaviours. However, women living in British Columbia are 1.2 times ($p < 0.01$) more likely to engage in overall self-protection, but there is no effect on self-defense class enrollment or weapon-carrying independently. Furthermore, living in a rural area yields no significant effect on any of the three dependent variables.

Additionally, when a respondent participates in over 30 nighttime activities in the duration of a month, there is a significantly positive relationship with all three dependant variables ($p < 0.01$). Women who partake in 30 or more activities within a month are 1.4 times more likely to enroll in a self-defense class, 1.2 times more likely to carry a weapon, and 1.3 times more likely to engage in overall protection. For those who participate in 15 to 29 activities a month, there is a slightly significant relationship for

engaging in overall protection ($p < 0.05$). Accordingly, these women are 1.1 times more likely to engage in overall protection. These results are in comparison to women who engage in fewer than 15 activities a month.

General insecurity has a significantly positive effect ($p < 0.01$) on all three variables. Women who experience high amounts of general insecurity regarding their safety are 1.3 times more likely to enroll in a self-defense class, 1.9 times more likely to carry a weapon, and 1.7 times more likely to engage in overall protection.

Living in a high-crime neighbourhood yields a significantly positive effect on both weapon carrying ($p < 0.01$) and overall protection ($p < 0.01$), but not on self-defense class enrollment. This may be because high-crime neighbourhoods tend to be categorized as low SES, and weapon carrying is a cheaper option than enrolling in a self-defense class that requires a fee. Also, in neighbourhoods characterized as dangerous and high-crime prone, engaging in martial arts may not be enough to thwart an attack. In such cases, a weapon would provide considerably more protection than self-defense class techniques. Knowing your neighbours has a significantly positive effect on all three variables, with self-defense class enrollment ($p < 0.01$) and overall protection ($p < 0.01$) yielding a slightly higher result than weapon carrying ($p < 0.05$). It is interesting that women who know most or many of their neighbours are more likely to engage in self-protection, as this contradicts the traditional social support hypothesis. This notion assumes that knowing more people in the neighbourhood would make one feel safer and reduce the need for self-protection. However, it may be that women in these neighbourhoods share their experiences of victimization and insecurity with one another, which leads to more women engaging in self-protection.

Table 4 presents the third model, which looks at how sexual victimization in comparison to physical victimization influences women's engagement in self-protective behaviours. This table includes only women who have been victims of violence, and excludes the non-victims. Sexual victimization has a significantly positive effect on weapon carrying ($p < 0.05$) and overall protection ($p = 0.01$). Women who have been sexually victimized are 1.4 times more likely to carry a weapon and 1.5 times more likely to engage in overall protection than women who have been physically victimized. There is no effect on self-defense class enrollment.

Table 4 (Model 3). Logistic regression separating the effects of sexual victimization versus physical victimization on self-protection (n = 715)

	<u>Self-defense</u> Exp(B)	<u>Weapon</u> Exp(B)	<u>Overall Protection</u> Exp(B)
Constant	0.259**	0.725**	1.034
Sexual victimization	1.208	1.368*	1.518**

** = $p < 0.01$
* = $p < 0.05$

Table 5 examines the effect of sexual versus physical victimization on engaging in self-protective behaviours while taking the control variables into account. This model looks exclusively at victims of violence, and excludes non-victims.

Sexual victimization is not significant in predicting self-defense class enrollment or weapon carrying independently when the effects of the control variables are included. However, sexual victimization is a significantly positive predictor for engaging in overall protection ($p = 0.05$). This confirms that sexual victimization is an important factor in women trying to protect themselves by any means possible, above and beyond the impact of physical victimization. These results demonstrate that this relationship remains pertinent even when the control variables are accounted for.

Even in a sample of victims only, age still remains a significantly negative predictor for enrolling in a self-defense class ($p < 0.05$), but does not affect weapon carrying or overall protection. As women age, they are less likely to enroll in a self-defense class. Furthermore, the results indicate that women who have children under age 14 are less likely to enroll in a self-defense class ($p < 0.05$). Having children has no effect on either of the two remaining dependent variables.

The results illustrate that visible minority status is a significantly negative predictor for enrolling in a self-defense class ($p < 0.05$) and engaging in overall protection ($p < 0.05$), but has no effect on weapon carrying. Essentially, women of visible minority status are less likely than their Caucasian counterparts to enroll in a self-defense class or engage in overall protection.

Table 5 (Model 4). Logistic regression separating the effects of sexual victimization versus physical victimization on self-protection with control variables (n = 715)

	<u>Self-defense</u> Exp(B)	<u>Weapon</u> Exp(B)	<u>Overall Protection</u> Exp(B)
Constant	0.693	0.512	1.576
Sexual victimization	1.150	1.342	1.399 ^a
Age	0.908*	0.978	0.942
Marital status (single)	0.969	0.750	0.710
Children (age 14 and younger)	0.659*	1.045	0.830
Visible minority	0.527*	0.741	0.610*
Income			
Low (less than \$20,000)	0.635	0.891	0.681
Medium (\$20,000-60,000)	0.924	1.345	1.095
Unknown	1.220	0.512	1.197
Education			
High school or less	0.331**	1.191	0.836
College/ trade school	0.743	1.371	1.142
Rural	1.095	1.797**	1.617*
Region			
Atlantic	0.577	0.526*	0.553*
Quebec	0.480*	0.902	0.665
Prairies	0.953	0.847	0.839
British Columbia	0.963	1.228	1.192
Evening activities per month			
15-29 night activities	1.239	0.754	0.822
+30 night activities	1.273	0.970	1.105
General insecurity	1.557*	2.538**	2.282**
Neighbourhood crime	1.116	1.168	1.320
Neighbours known	1.463	1.156	1.169

** = p < 0.01
* = p < 0.05
^a = p = 0.051

In regards to level of education, the 'high school or less' category negatively predicts enrollment in a self-defense class ($p < 0.01$) in comparison to the 'university' category. Women who have a high school degree or less are 67% less likely to enroll in a self-defense class than university educated women. Furthermore, level of education has no effect on weapon carrying or overall protection.

Living in a rural region is a significantly positive predictor for weapon carrying ($p < 0.01$) and overall protection ($p < 0.05$) but has no effect on self-defense class enrollment. Women who dwell in rural areas are 1.8 times more likely to carry a weapon

and 1.6 times more likely to engage in overall protection than their urban counterparts. This pattern is quite different than the full model, suggesting that female victims of violence in rural areas tend to take their safety into their own hands.

In terms of region of residence, living in the Atlantic is a significantly negative predictor for weapon carrying ($p < 0.05$) and overall protection ($p < 0.05$), but has no effect on self-defense class enrollment. So, women dwelling in the Atlantic region are 48% less likely to carry a weapon and 45% less likely to engage in overall protection compared to their Ontario counterparts. Women living in Quebec are 52% less likely to enroll in a self-defense class ($p < 0.05$) compared to their Ontario counterparts, but there is no relationship with weapon carrying or overall protection.

Lastly, general insecurity with personal safety yields a significantly positive effect across all three dependent variables. Women who disclosed a general insecurity regarding personal safety are 1.6 times more likely to enroll in a self-defense class ($p < 0.05$), 2.5 times more likely to carry a weapon ($p < 0.01$), and 2.3 times more likely to engage in overall protection ($p < 0.01$).

When looking at all women, both physical and sexual victimization proved extremely significant for all three measures of self-protection (self-defense class, weapon carrying and overall protection). However, when examining the victims only, sexual victimization was a bit more prominent than physical victimization for overall protection. When the control variables are taken into account, patterns are similar, but somewhat weaker. Potential explanations for these relationships will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 5

5. Discussion

The goal of this study was to examine the relationship between women's past experiences of victimization and their subsequent engagement in self-protective behaviour. This study sought to determine whether past experiences of victimization more generally, or sexual victimization specifically influence self-defense class enrollment, weapon carrying or both behaviours concurrently (overall protection). Accordingly, three hypotheses were tested. The first hypothesis proposed that both physical and sexual violence would lead to more women engaging in self-protection in comparison with non-victims. This notion follows the traditional feminist criminology stance, where due to the pervasiveness of gender inequality, women in general are more likely to engage in self-protective behaviour when they have been victimized, regardless of the type of violence. The results indicate strong findings for this hypothesis. When comparing victims of sexual and physical violence to non-victims, women who experienced sexual victimization were 2 to 3 times more likely to engage in self-protection. In terms of physical violence, women were 2 times more likely. When the control variables were included in the model, women who had been sexually victimized were 1.6 to 2 times more likely to engage in self-protection than their non-victim counterparts. Women who had been physically victimized were 1.5 to 1.7 times more likely. Although sexual victimization seems to be a more significant predictor, both types of violence are quite important when examining them in relation to the non-victim group.

The competing second and third hypotheses examined the victims-only sample. The second hypothesis determined whether sexual violence has a stronger impact than physical violence on women's self-protective behaviours. This perspective views sexual victimization as the most degrading and stigmatizing form of victimization for women. It puts forth the idea that in our society, women are more likely to experience sexual victimization than any other type of violence, and are therefore more likely to resort to self-protective measures as a result (rather than due to physical violence). The third hypothesis looked at whether sexual and physical violence have a similar effect on

women's self-protective behaviour. When examining the latter two competing hypotheses, there is some evidence that *sexual victimization* has a greater impact on women engaging in self-protective behaviours. On the other hand, there is no statistical difference between sexual and physical violence on weapon-carrying and self-defense class enrollment in isolation.

5.1. Past experiences of victimization and self-protective behaviours

Compared with non-victims, victims of physical and sexual violence are more likely to engage in self-protection. This evidence supports the first hypothesis that women who have been victimized (regardless of what type) are more likely to resort to self-protective behaviours than women who have not been victimized. However, when comparing physical and sexual violence victims independently, the strongest measure pertaining to overall self-protective behaviours (self-defense class enrollment and weapon carrying) is past experiences of sexual victimization within the last five years. These findings suggest that sexual victimization serves as a master offence for women, meaning that this type of violence is uniquely gendered and overshadows other types of violence. These findings correspond with previous studies that demonstrate that women who have been sexually victimized have more extensive histories of engaging in self-protection (Brecklin, 2004; Follansbee, 1982; Hollander, 2010; Stanko, 1990; Stanko, 1992). There is scholarly evidence that women who have been sexually victimized are more fearful than their non-victim counterparts, and have a heightened awareness of their vulnerability (Culbertson et al., 2001; Stanko, 1990; Stanko, 1992). Accordingly, it seems that this higher sensitivity to their vulnerability increases the likelihood that they will resort to self-protective precautions (such as enrolling in a self defense class or carrying a weapon or tool for safety). In the victims-only model, sexual violence victims were 1.4 times more likely to engage in overall protection than women who had been physically victimized, while taking into account the control variables. In comparison to their non-victim counterparts, women who had experienced sexual victimization were more than twice as likely to engage in overall protection. Muraskin (2012) asserts that following incidences of rape, the most common and widespread concern for victims is that the assailant will return. This could be a possible explanation for women's subsequent

engagement in self-protective measures. Enrolling in a self-defense class or carrying some sort of weapon or tool may provide a sense of perceived safety for women who have been victimized.

The findings in this study can be understood from a rational choice perspective, where women who have been sexually victimized assess their likelihood of further victimization given their status as women in a patriarchal society. Felson and Paré (2010) suggest that self-defensive tactics are a strategic adaptation to the presence of dangerous adversaries. In conjunction with past experiences of sexual victimization, and given their relative size, strength and physical power in comparison to men's, it is not surprising from a rational choice perspective that women would resort to self-protective behaviours in order to level the playing field. DeKeseredy and Hinch (1991) note that most sexual assaults are committed by persons known to the victim, such as dates, partners, ex-partners, family members, friends, acquaintances, co-workers, and so on. From this perspective, anyone could be a potential risk. Furthermore, women are also less likely to seek help from the criminal justice system when they have been victimized by someone they know (*ibid*). Consequently, they may take measures into their own hands and engage in some form of self-protection.

For survivors of sexual victimization, engaging in self-protection may serve as a keen source of both empowerment and healing. Self-protective behaviours have been noted to decrease fear, anxiety and distress, while simultaneously increasing women's sense of control following victimization (Brecklin and Ullman, 2004; Hollander, 2010; Stanko, 1990). The findings in this study suggest that self-protective behaviours may be a means of regaining control following a traumatic incident of victimization. Brecklin (2004) explains that self-protective strategies have therapeutic advantages for rape survivors, and can reduce psychological distress relating to the trauma. From this perspective, engaging in self-protection may not be related to increasing physical safety, but rather focused on the interpersonal and emotional aspect of such behaviours. Often following a distressing event such as sexual victimization, the emotional scars remain with the woman far longer than the physical ones. Accordingly, engaging in self-protective behaviours may serve to alleviate feelings of anxiety and disempowerment, and provide women with a sense of closure and opportunity to heal.

The findings in this study suggest that physical victimization does independently influence engagement in self-protection, even though the effect is smaller than for sexual violence. A potential reason for this smaller effect is that physical violence directed at women is usually in the context of intimate relationships, in the form of intimate partner/ domestic violence (Chesney-Lind and Pasko, 2004; Comack, 2006; Muraskin, 2012). Within the context of such violence, women are less likely to report it or leave, due to the fact that it is often being perpetuated by a loved one (Ferraro and Johnson, 1983). Due to the often private nature of physical violence against women (in general), victims may be less likely to engage in self-protection, in comparison to women who have been sexually victimized. Possibly because the victimizer is usually an intimate partner, women who have experienced physical victimization may not deem their situation as dangerous enough to engage in self-protection. In comparison, women who have been sexually victimized may feel more comfortable engaging in self-protection because the perpetrator was not necessarily an intimate partner. So although physical victimization is a factor in influencing women's self-protective behaviours, it is not as strong a predictor as sexual victimization.

5.2. Other factors influencing self-protective behaviour among women

Within the full model, age is a negative predictor for all three outcomes, where women are less likely to engage in self-protection as they age. Older women may feel uneasy about carrying a weapon, and may be unable to perform self-defense 'moves' as effectively as younger women because they often involve a high degree of physical assertion. When examining the victims-only sample, age is only an important negative predictor for enrolling in a self-defense class. This further demonstrates that the majority of women who take self-defense classes are younger, and this is often due to them being offered in institutions such as universities.

Marital status has a strong positive effect on enrollment in a self-defense class and overall protection within the full model. The results demonstrate that single women are 1.2 times more likely to enroll in a self-defense class and 1.1 times more likely to engage in overall protection. A possible reason for this is that single women may experience greater insecurity about their personal safety because they live alone. However, when

examining the victims-only model, this relationship disappears and marital status no longer remains a predictor of self-protective behaviour. This is perhaps because being single no longer matters when a woman has been victimized, which has a similar traumatic effect on her whether she is in a relationship or not.

Having children (ages 14 and younger) is a significantly negative predictor of engaging in self-protective behaviour for all three outcomes in the full model. There are a few plausible explanations for this. Firstly, women with children may feel that self-protective behaviour could endanger their children. For example, in terms of weapon carrying, women may feel that their children could get hold of a weapon if it were on their person or in the house. Secondly, taking a self-defense class is time-consuming, and a mother with young children may not be able to fit it into her busy schedule. Thirdly, women with young children (compared with older children or no children) are likely to spend more time at home, rather than in risky environments such as bars. When examining the victims-only model, having children is only a negative predictor for enrolling in a self-defense class, and has no effect on weapon carrying and overall protection.

When examining the full model, visible minority status is negative predictor on all three outcomes. Self-protective strategies (such as a self-defense class) may be inaccessible to visible minorities based on their community or neighbourhood locations. Also, self-protective strategies may conflict with cultural norms (such as views of femininity and masculinity) for certain visible minorities. In the victims-only model, visible minority status is a negative predictor for enrolling in a self-defense class and engaging in overall protection, but has no effect on weapon carrying independently. Possible explanations for this may be that self-defense classes are generally offered in a university setting, and the majority of university students are Caucasian. Additionally, visible minorities in Canada are more likely to be economically disadvantaged than their Caucasian counterparts, and self-protective mechanisms such as a weapon, or enrolling in a class can be costly.

In the full model, level of income is a strong negative predictor of enrolling in a self-defense class, weapon carrying and overall protection for the low-income bracket (less than \$20,000). This is likely due to self-protective measures such as a self-defense

class being costly. Women in the medium income bracket (\$20,000-60,000 annually) are less likely to enroll in a self-defense class, but there is no effect on weapon carrying and overall protection. A potential explanation for this is that self-defense classes are time consuming, and these women may not be able to make such a commitment. In the victims-only sample, income has no effect on self-protection.

In the full model, level of education is a negative predictor for enrollment in a self-defense class and overall protection for those who have a high school degree or less. It is also a negative predictor for enrollment in a self-defense class for women who have a trade school or college degree. This is likely due to self-defense classes being predominately offered in university settings, and therefore not all individuals have equal access to them. Interestingly, having a college or trade school degree is a positive predictor of weapon carrying, where such women are almost two times more likely to carry a weapon than women with a university degree. Once again, this may be due to self-defense classes being less accessible to those women not in university, and therefore weapon carrying becomes a keen alternative. In the victims-only model, having a high school degree or less negatively contributes to enrollment in self-defense class. This is probably due to the inaccessibility of self-defense classes to the general public, as many classes are offered through universities.

In the full model, place of residence (urban versus rural) has no effect on engagement in self-protective behaviour. Interestingly though, in the victims-only model, place of residence is a positive predictor on engaging in self-protection. Women residing in rural areas are almost twice as likely to carry a weapon and 1.6 times more likely to engage in overall protection. In his research on the Southern United States, Young (1985) argues that regional socialization predicts weapon ownership for females more so than for males due to self-defense reasons. This explanation can be applied to women in this study, who due to their remote locations, carrying a weapon or tool may be more strategic and accessible. Furthermore, urban centres are more likely to host a variety of self-defense classes, whereas in rural areas, weapons or tools are more readily available.

Region of residence negatively influences self-protection in the full model for women who reside in the Atlantic and Quebec regions. Women residing in the Atlantic and Quebec regions are less likely to engage in all three types of self-protection in

comparison to their Ontario counterparts. In the victims-only model, women dwelling in the Atlantic region are less likely to carry a weapon and engage in overall protection, but there is no effect on self-defense class enrollment. Women dwelling in the Quebec region are less likely than their Ontario counterparts to enroll in a self-defense class. These lower levels of self-protection in the Quebec and Atlantic regions may be due to the lower violent crimes rates in these regions (Statistics Canada, 2008). However, in the full model, women living in British Columbia are 1.2 times more likely to engage in overall protection, but this relationship disappears in the victims-only model. The violent crime rates in Western Canada are much higher, with British Columbia's being 26% higher than the Canadian average (ibid). Therefore, women living in British Columbia may feel the need to readily defend themselves given these higher rates of violence. These higher rates of regional violence generally may overshadow whether a woman has been victimized or not, which explains why the relationship disappeared in the victims only model.

In the full model, the number of evening activities that women partake in per month is a positive predictor of self-protective behaviour. Women who participate in 15 to 29 evening activities a month are more likely to engage in overall protection. Women who partake in more than 30 evening activities per month are more likely to engage in all three types of self-protection. As these women spend a significant amount of time out of their homes at night, they have a greater chance of experiencing a dangerous encounter than women who stay home. In the victims-only model, this relationship no longer exists, with the number of evening activities per month having no effect on self-protection. This suggests that victimization affects these women similarly, regardless of how many evening activities they participate in a month.

General insecurity and fear of crime proved to be a significantly positive predictor for all three outcomes in both the full model and victims-only model. Women who generally experience anxiety regarding personal safety are approximately twice as likely to engage in self-protective behaviours. This is likely due to women's status as the 'physically weaker' gender (Felson, 2002) and a perceived awareness of their 'second class citizen' status in comparison to men (Muraskin, 2012). Even though men are more likely to be victims of crime, women tend to experience more anxiety and insecurity over their levels of personal safety (Stanko, 1990). Women will often label themselves as

constantly at risk of danger, such as victimization, most notably due to their gender. This helps explain the significance of general insecurity in influencing self-protection.

High neighbourhood crime is a strong positive predictor of weapon carrying and overall protection in the full model, but has no effect in the victims-only model. A potential explanation for the importance of this variable in the full model is that regardless of experiencing victimization, women may resort to self-protective behaviours if they live in a dangerous neighbourhood. The fact that the neighbourhood is dangerous, is probably the primary reason for self-protection. Furthermore, weapon carrying may be more strategic in an unsafe neighbourhood, as self-defense 'moves' may prove ineffective against skilled criminals.

In the full model, knowing many neighbours is a strong positive predictor of self-protection for all three outcomes, but has no effect in the victims-only model. This is an interesting finding as it contradicts that traditional social support hypothesis that knowing more neighbours should contribute to a higher perceived sense of safety. However, it may be that women do not trust their neighbours, or have shared experiences of insecurity with each other, which may contribute to this higher likelihood of engaging in self-protection.

5.3. Limitations, implications, and future research

The findings in this study are important because they highlight how violence in our society is often gendered. This study demonstrates that a significant number of Canadian women have been sexually and/ or physically victimized, and have subsequently taken up measures to protect themselves from further victimization. This is an important social trend that is often overlooked, because the focus is generally on the prevalence of victimization, rather than women's behaviour following the incident(s). In our society, men are socialized to live up to an ideal of hegemonic masculinity, and women often experience the downside of this through violent victimization. This study highlights that women are resisting male aggression, and regaining power by engaging in self-protective measures.

It is important to recognize the widespread and pervasive nature of male violence against women, and that women as a group are more likely to experience victimization

and abuse at the hands of males (Gilfus, 2002). However, there are many differences between women, and how various groups of women experience gendered violence, and subsequently engage in self-protective measures is diverse. Gender inequality is embedded in social institutions, and depending on which categories or statuses women encompass, and how they interact with one another will affect how they experience violent victimization, and the opportunities they have to engage in self-protective measures. Drawing on Hill-Collins (2000), essentialist and totalizing conceptions of women's experiences masks differences among women. Women's experiences of victimization will differ based on statuses such as visible minority, or SES, and so on. It is therefore important to interpret the results of this study from a critical standpoint, and understand that women as a group do not experience social phenomena similarly by virtue of their gender. Although aboriginal women were not separated from the general visible minority variable in this study, they can be used to demonstrate the importance of interpreting these results from an intersectional standpoint. Aboriginal women are more likely than the general public to experience victimization, particularly in conjunction with other problems such as colonization, social marginalization, forced dependency on the state, poverty and high rates of violence. It is therefore imperative to simultaneously acknowledge how these various statuses interact and affect engagement in self-protective measures.

5.3.1. Limitations

There are several limitations in this study that may have affected the results. Firstly, given the nature of the GSS being cross-sectional, and this study focusing on only the past five years, the estimates of sexual and physical violence are quite conservative. It is possible that respondents had been victimized prior to the five-year mark and therefore this study could have yielded different results if it extended this range to include childhood victimization for example. Conversely, surveys that ask about long-term personal histories might suffer from memory problems, as women may not accurately recall details of the event.

Secondly, as with any survey data, a dark figure of crime will always exist. In this case, victimization rates may be underestimated due to issues with reporting. Participants

may not feel comfortable reporting, or accurately report for various reasons, examples being social desirability bias or post-traumatic stress disorder. This may be particularly the case as the GSS is executed in quite an impersonal manner (telephone conversation), and the surveyor often does not have the time or resources to ensure that each participant feels at ease divulging personal information (such as experiences of victimization). Additionally, many respondents in the groundbreaking 1993 Violence Against Women Survey indicated that they did not feel comfortable relaying their experiences of victimization in traditional victimization surveys (Johnson, 2002). The chief researcher Holly Johnson pointed out that this was often due to reasons such as male interviewers and a lack of sensitivity from interviewers in general. It is quite possible that the prevalence of victimization was underreported due to related reasons. Similarly, participants may choose to not inform the surveyor of their self-protective behaviours because of issues surrounding legality. An example of this may be that a participant carries an illegal weapon on them.

Thirdly, the quantitative nature of the study does not allow for the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of *why* women choose to engage in self-protective behaviour. Based on the results, the researcher can make deductions as to why this relationship exists, but without speaking directly to the participants, the actual motive remains unknown. Accordingly, a mixed methods study would assist in clarifying the meaning of sexual versus physical violence for women and how this relates to feelings of insecurity.

5.3.2. Future Research

This study provides a good empirical and substantive basis for understanding the relationship between past experiences of victimization and subsequent self-protective measures. However, there are some future areas of research that would highly contribute to a greater knowledge and understanding of these phenomena. They are discussed below.

It would be beneficial to conduct a subsequent analysis using the 2009 GSS to determine the specific effects of victimization perpetrated by someone known to the victim or a stranger. Such a study could also isolate the effects of intimate partner

violence compared with other types of physical and sexual victimization. This would be an interesting area of research as the majority of women report being fearful of “strangers”, when in reality, women are more likely to be victimized by someone known to them, particularly an intimate partner (Gartner and Macmillan, 1995).

A longitudinal study examining how sexual and physical victimization influence self-protective behaviours over the life course would be a keen area of future research to pursue. The results of this study demonstrate that sexual victimization is a significant predictor of self-protective behaviours, and a longitudinal study would demonstrate whether this relationship is amplified over the life course. Also, a longitudinal study would be useful to assess whether engaging in self-protection reduces future risk of sexual and physical victimization.

A qualitative follow-up study would be beneficial. Such a study could include in-depth interviews with female victims of sexual and physical violence, as well as self-defense class instructors. This would facilitate a greater understanding of the motivations behind women engaging in self-protection. Furthermore, participants may feel more at ease in providing greater details about traumatic events than they would necessarily divulge in an impersonal survey.

A final area of future research would be to replicate this study at a cross-national level. A comparative analysis of Canada and the United States could provide some insight as to whether past experiences of sexual victimization and subsequent engagement in self-protection is more pronounced in one country, and allow for cultural comparisons. The majority of studies on women and self-protection have been conducted solely in the United States and are not cross-national (Angelman et al., 2009; Brecklin 2004; Brecklin and Ullman, 2005; Cummings, 1992; Hollander, 2010; Huddleston, 1991). Furthermore, this comparison with the United States may be particularly interesting, as the country has less stringent regulations on gun ownership than Canada.

5.3.3. Conclusion

Violence against women is an institutional problem that numerous scholars have labeled an epidemic (Comack, 2006; Kimmel, 2008; Stanko, 1986). There is a substantial amount of research detailing the extent to which women experience victimization

(physical, sexual and emotional), but only recently have scholars addressed women's attempts to "fight back". This study provides both a theoretical and empirical foundation for examining the relationship between women's experiences of victimization and their subsequent engagement in self-protective measures. This study demonstrates that women who have been victimized (physically or sexually) are approximately twice as likely to engage in self-protective measures than women who have not been victimized. This finding becomes more pertinent when examining the victims-only group, where women who have been sexually victimized are about one and a half times more likely to engage in self-protection than those who have been physically victimized. These findings provide some contextual understanding as to how women as a group experience physical and sexual danger, which due to the gendered nature of violence, differs for men and women.

A significant number of women in this study experienced physical and/or sexual victimization, and their subsequent self-protective measures likely stemmed from the aftermath of this violence. It is important to recognize the connection between past experiences of victimization, and how this contributes to women's self-protective behaviour. There is a distinct pattern among Canadian women, with one in three either carrying a weapon or enrolling in a self-defense class. This pattern speaks to the fact that it is an institutional issue. Feminist criminologists should consider how women's perceptions of safety are constructed, and how women both experience and react to victimization. Policy-makers, both in government and the criminal justice system, should take this information into account in order to cope with, challenge and prevent gendered violence. With the advent of the feminist self-defense movement, it would be beneficial to implement self-protective programs for female victims of violence, where they can receive both trauma counseling and strategic self-protection plans.

In the short term, these micro level changes will be advantageous in assisting individual women who have experienced victimization, but broader social changes within the structure of our society are also required. Reactive strategies such as providing a safe space for women who have experienced violence are beneficial, but as a society we must focus on proactively preventing such experiences from occurring in the first place. Stanko (1986) points out that all women have experienced some type of male violation whether it is severe physical or sexual victimization, sexual harassment, or an invasion of

privacy. Our society is structured in such a way that women are expected to manage their own safety. Women are constantly reminded not to dress provocatively if they do not want to attract unwanted sexual attention, and specialized handguns are even manufactured to fit into a woman's purse. The problem here is not about women's capabilities of self-protection, but rather the fact that such a significant number of Canadian women feel the need to engage in self-protection.

As a society, we need to counter these normative beliefs that women are responsible for protecting themselves from violence. Gendered violence should not exist in the first place, and it is often rooted in how we define masculinity as 'dominance over women'. There needs to be a change at the cultural level in how we define masculinity and gender dynamics. In order to challenge such a deep-seated belief system, members of society must be educated about it at a young age. It would be valuable to implement mandatory "Gender Studies" classes in elementary schools where children can be socialized to understand both gender dynamics and gender equality. Additionally, there needs to be a shift in how the media portrays both genders, ranging from sexualized women in advertisements, to representations of hegemonic masculinity on television, such as World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE). Although these recommendations may not completely eradicate gendered violence, it is a step in the right direction.

Powerlessness and a perceived sense of vulnerability are shared experiences for women as a group. This is problematic. What is even more problematic is the common response to male violence and female subjugation, such as "she asked for it" and "boys will be boys". We must contest the fact that male violence against women is defined solely as a problem for women, yet an almost normative behaviour for men. Providing members of society with a more profound understanding of these social phenomena from the perspective of women is critical in challenging and preventing gendered violence.

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Curriculum Vitae

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